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INFO RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER
MALIKI

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan Crocker. For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: During his introductory meeting with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Ambassador Crocker emphasized full U.S. support for the PM and his government. Maliki expressed concern about a lack of international support of Iraqi democracy, except from the U.S. He had not decided on a date or venue for the International Compact for Iraq (ICI) or Expanded Neighbors Ministerial. The Ambassador stressed the importance of holding these conferences soon, and U.S. commitment to ensuring they produced positive results. He said he remained optimistic about Iraq's future and looked forward to working with PM Maliki and his government during his tenure in Baghdad. End Summary.

Ambassador to PM: The U.S. Supports You

12. (S) The Ambassador, accompanied by DCM, initiated the meeting with Prime Minister Maliki by expressing full U.S. support for the PM, beginning with President Bush. The Ambassador noted that before he left Washington, President Bush was with Maliki completely. PM Maliki expressed appreciation for the kind remarks, adding that he wished President Bush success for himself and for the future of Iraq. The Ambassador and PM agreed that Iraq faces many challenges, but that we must continue jointly to address these challenges. The Ambassador recognized recent positive developments, including progress toward passing laws on de-Ba'athification, investment, hydrocarbons, and the Independent High Electoral Commission. At the same time, we must see progress on constitutional review and Provincial Council elections, which should be carried out in a manner that restores faith in the political process.

13. (S) PM Maliki emphasized that Iraq had no intention of retreating on the democratic developments of the past four years. Maliki noted that the creation of the National Unity Government led to the imposition of some ministers who may not be well-placed, although a project was underway to change some ministers. He lamented that each sectarian or ethnic group has its own set of issues of concern, coupled with lingering distrust and some fears of marginalization. Turning back on Iraq's democratic experiment, however, would lead to a lack of control over the course of events and Iraq's political direction. The Ambassador agreed with Maliki's assessment that President Bush also shared this view.

14. (S) The Ambassador stated that he had come with a great sense of optimism about Iraq's future. The Iraqi people, even the Sunni, remember the difficulties and persecution of the Saddam era. The Ambassador reiterated to Maliki, "You have our complete support."

¶5. (S) Turning to Iraq's regional relations, the Ambassador noted the success of the Neighbors' Conference hosted in Baghdad in March, and the planned Ministerial-level Expanded Neighbors' conference had the potential to strengthen regional and international support of efforts underway in Iraq. Maliki advocated that the International Compact for Iraq (ICI) meeting come first, referencing earlier conversations he had with Ambassador Khalilzad on the issue. He stressed the importance of guarantees from the international community, which were included in the ICI.

¶6. (S) Maliki then went further to say that first and foremost Iraq needed a "supportive international atmosphere," and neither Iraq's neighbors nor many of the P-5 truly supported the GOI. He expressed suspicions in particular of French and Russian motives, as well as what he called Arab League notions of "international guardianship." Maliki said he had told Secretary Rice that Iraq is afraid that others in the international community seek to undermine Iraqi democracy -- "we do not find any supporters except for President Bush." Only Iran, Syria, and the U.S. truly want the Neighbors Conference; the positions of other states, including Egypt and Turkey, "are not clear."

Possible Venues for ICI and Neighbors' Conference

¶7. (S) With regard to the venue for the Neighbors' Conference Ministerial, Maliki said some regional states want it to take place in Iraq, others outside. The Ambassador noted that

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Saudi Arabia, Cairo, and Istanbul were mentioned most frequently. Maliki responded Saudi King Abdullah's statement at the Arab League summit calling the efforts in Iraq "illegal occupation" complicated discussion on the issue. A location in the Kurdistan region might be complicated because the Kurds could use it to push their position on Kirkuk. Maliki said the issue of a location needed to be discussed calmly and the conference held in a way that produced positive results.

¶8. (S) The Ambassador agreed that we need to ensure positive results and that it remained in both our interest to hold both the ICI and Expanded Neighbors Conference soon, perhaps on successive days. The Turks were particularly interested in hosting. The U.S. was prepared to exert effort to guarantee successful, positive results. Maliki said he was considering a trip to countries he was most worried about. The Ambassador closed the discussion by reaffirming his commitment to Iraq and to helping Iraqis achieve the difficult task of reconciliation. He said he remained optimistic about Iraq's future and our common efforts to bring down violence and strengthen Iraqi institutions.

CROCKER